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HAD HIS NERVES SHAKEN.

Victim of the Joke Probably Headed Straight for a Drug Store.

I saw a young man light a Hungarian cigar the other evening and throw himself back in a chair to enjoy the smoke and conversation, says a writer in the New York Herald. The Hungarian cigar is something like a Pittsburg toby, only it is twice as long as the Pittsburg article, and before you get through with it is also twice as strong. The young man was more interested in the conversation than in the cigar, apparently, for he laid the latter down on the edge of the table a moment as he talked. The waggish gentleman next to him slyly took the cigar and cut off about three inches of the fire and began to smoke it, replacing the body of the weed. When the young man got through with his story, at which all the rest laughed extravagantly, he picked up the cigar again and pulled at it. His face wore a puzzled look as he glanced at the end and saw it had apparently never been lighted. But he struck a match and lighted it again. After a few puffs he laid it down to answer the pleasantries, whereupon the man on the other side drew his knife and neatly cut the fire end off and dropped it in the cuspidor. The expression on the face of the story-teller when he picked up that cigar and again essayed to smoke was something too funny to describe. He gave two or three vigorous puffs at it, then stopped and looked at the fresh end, while the other fellows were interested in almost anything else at the moment. As soon as the would-be smoker saw that his cigar had not been lighted he turned a little pale, shoved his unemptied glass aside, and with a hasty apology and a story of an alleged forgotten engagement, bolted for the street, amid the demoniacal glee of the cruel men left behind. Thus doth conscience make cowards of us all.

By Contract.

Every one who has visited Paris is familiar with the Duval restaurants, originally established by a poor tradesman, whose fortune they made. They combine spacious accommodation, service and attendance, scrupulous cleanliness, and high-class cooking, with prices so moderate as will appear to the stranger at once a revelation and a godsend, and also a varied and tempting menu for the day. The Paris Duvals are run on strictly commercial lines, and, notwithstanding the low prices, they pay handsome dividends. They are made to pay by the rigid economy of the administration, but more especially of the cooking, which is conducted on scientific principles, so that there is no waste either in the bulk of the raw material or the nutriment of the cooked viands. They are patronized by all classes, for while the prices are within the reach of those with any sort of income at all, the elegance and comfort of the salons and the appointments, the excellent service and smart attendance, make them acceptable even to the affluent. So successful have they proved that a company is being formed in London for the purpose of establishing similar ones in that great city. Nor does the scheme end here; there are to be huge central depots for the retail vending of provisions and comestibles of all kinds. The company, in fact, will be a public caterer and purveyor on the most extensive scale, undertaking to supply to the customer's own house anything from a single meal to the entire living of the household, all the year round. A standing contract can be made with the company to send in daily breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper, or any one or more of the meals, cooked, hot, and ready to be put in the mouth, the company supplying, if desired, all the appointments and even the attendance. For servants are to be part of their business as well, and cooks, housemaids, parlor-maids, etc., will be let out by day, week, month, etc. The entire cares of housekeeping, in fact, will be undertaken by the company, and life is to become an ideal existence to those who unreservedly place themselves in the company's hands at a contract price, which is to be extremely moderate. What a boon such a scheme would be in America! A fortune awaits the men who are energetic enough to carry it through.

Destruction of Forests.

The ax and the torch are formidable foes to the forest, but scarcely more so than the beetle and grub. They may not make the sensation caused by a forest conflagration, nor do they endanger life; yet the report of the United States Entomological Commission shows that they destroy annually many million dollars' worth of valuable trees and lumber. There is a difference in the habits and methods of these insects, some attacking only dead woods or stumps. The sap wood alone is perforated by certain species, while others pierce the sound heart of the tree. Minute perforations called "pin holes" are often found in otherwise sound oak and chestnut wood, which are a serious injury to square timbers, planks, staves and headings. These are made by larvae armed with horny gouges, the young of certain winged beetles. They pierce through to the heart wood, while other kinds stop in the sap wood. The latter are usually the adults, however, instead of the young, the tiny beetles burrowing nests, or even extensive galleries, for the purpose of depositing their eggs. The brood remains imprisoned till matured, when it emerges to repeat the work of destruction on new material. How great that destructive work is in the aggregate it is impossible now to say, owing to our meager knowledge of facts. By some the depreciated value of the annual lumber output is estimated at fully fifty per cent. Thoughtful people might feel alarmed at this were it not that by simple and comparatively inexpensive measures, a large per cent. of this immense loss can be prevented. Experiments are being made as to the introduction of friendly parasites that shall rid our woods of hostile insects. Suggestions have been offered as to steaming the infested timber, and other direct modes of attack. Among other methods under consideration is the fostering and multiplication of friendly birds that are known to feed on the hostile insects. These allies are especially valuable in warding off those forest pests that are known to attack growing trees. No one can doubt that the woodpeckers, for instance, obtain a large share of their food from the insect world. The birds are undoubtedly among our best friends as insect destroyers. Their mission in the economy of nature is to thin the ranks of a vast army which, without their aid, we should be overwhelmed, and our forests would be hopelessly ruined.

Weather Prophets.

The incredulity of the general public with regard to weather predictions which are scientifically made—being based on actual observations over a great extent of country, transmitted by telegraph—and the common credulity as to almanac predictions and those made by charlatans and ignorant persons from the stars or the moon, suggest that, from a mercenary point of view, the "almanac prophets" may be justified in sticking to their "system."

Some idea of what this "system" is may be gathered from the private confession made by a man whose duty it was to prepare the weather prognostications for a certain almanac of wide circulation. "In a general way," he said, "I always used to consult my wife as to what she thought the weather ought to be at a certain date.

"'Sixteenth of March—sixteenth of March,' I said to her once; 'what shall I put down for that day?'

"'Dry and clear,' she answered promptly. 'That's the day I always boil my soap-grease, and I shall have to be outdoors.'

"So I put down 'dry and clear;' but knowing the uncertainty of the weather at that time of year, and remembering the proverbial ill luck of Irishmen on their holidays, I put down for the seventeenth of March, 'St. Patrick's day, look out for rain or snow.'"

The prognosticator always went to Boston on the first Monday in each month, and he invariably put down good weather for that day. During June, July and August he put in an immense preponderance of fine weather. The farmers, he declared, ought to have good weather then in order to get in their hay and grain.

The farmers who looked the almanac over were delighted with this promise, and bought it in great numbers.

"And in the end," said this sage prognosticator, "I got the weather right as often as anybody else did."

Nevertheless, scientific predictions, made for a day or two or three days in advance, will be preferred by persons of discretion, even if such forecasts do sometimes turn out wrong.

Another War.

Jokes at the expense of severe "schoolma'ams" who have passed the boundary of youth are numerous, and sometimes a trifle unkind, but the following will bear repeating, as it was heartily enjoyed by the teacher of whom it told.

The class in American history was up, the subject under consideration being the civil war. After some earnest discussion of causes, effects and the like, a pupil arose and began to give certain astonishing information regarding a battle at which he said his uncle had been present.

His teacher replied that the anecdote could hardly be true, as the uncle in question was near her age, and she was not born until after the close of the war.

The boy looked a little chagrined at being proved so evidently in the wrong, but after a few moments of embarrassed silence, he said, with the air of one who has much the best of the situation:

"Oh, but, Miss W., I did not mean the revolutionary war."

Foot Photography.

A fad over across the sea is to have your foot photographed as well as your hand or face—that is, if you are lucky enough to possess a foot blessed with artistic curves and outlines. A prominent society woman of New York, on her return from Paris several months ago, exhibited to a roomful of admiring friends the sweetest, daintiest little plaster cast of a foot, which, she declared, was a counterpart of her own, made by a sculptor of world-wide fame. She was at that moment having a life-size one carved in marble to be mounted on cerise velvet, and several small ones, one-half the size, struck off in different shades of pale pink, blue and old rose. The extraordinary popularity of "Trilby" has helped to direct attention to our humblest member, and now the women of New York are experimenting to see whether they have insteps that "water will flow under"—a sure sign of blue blood.

Shoe-Shining Machine.

Shining your shoes by machinery is one of the newest schemes of an ingenious inventor. It is a bootblacking machine, consisting of an applying brush, a fluid receptacle, and a blacking receptacle, so placed upon a stand that by the movement of a lever the small circular brush takes up the blacking and moistens and distributes it over the shoe; then the circular brush comes along and polishes the shoe before you can say "Jack Robinson." This clever contrivance fills the usual "long-felt want" for the gentlemen who cleans his own shoes in the seclusion of his chamber, but it is doubtful whether it will be fully appreciated by the itinerant bootblack, who wants his five cents a shine. Notwithstanding all objections, however, the new bootblacking machine is likely to be in great demand within a very short time.—House Furnishing Review.

Strazini's Great Gastronomy.

Strazini is the name of a wonder in Leipzig. Strazini astonishes his audiences by first eating soup which consists of saw-dust plentifully mixed with coal oil. The mess is set affre, and after the flames have been extinguished Strazini eats the peculiar mixture, ladling it out with a spoon, writes a Leipzig correspondent. He follows this up with biting piece after piece from the lamp chimney, crushing the glass between his teeth and swallowing it. He washes it down with a little water. For dessert he munches pieces of hard coal, peat, washing soap, tallow candles, and pieces of plaster.

Not Safe After All.

A Sydney (N. Y.) woman threw a worn-out satchel into the fire lately. It contained a $500 note and a roll of bills amounting to several hundred dollars more. Her husband had placed them there for safe keeping.

Prolific Land.

Bermuda farms bear three successive crops in one year.

A shining light in society is a very poor light to depend upon when darkness comes and storms blow.

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FACTS ABOUT PUTTY.

How It Is Made and Its Many Tints and Uses.

Pure putty is made of whiting and linseed oil. Whiting is made of chalk which is imported from England and ground in this country. Barytes, mixed with the whiting is used as an adulterant of putty, and cottonseed oil is mixed with the linseed oil. Cottonseed oil is cheaper, and a slower dryer than linseed; its use is advantageous to small customers, for putty mixed with part cottonseed oil keeps in order longer.

Linseed oil putty is used more by decorators and painters and other large consumers who use up putty quickly. Putty sells at wholesale from 1½ to 2 cents a pound. It is put up for the trade in barrels of 800 pounds, kegs of 300 pounds, in cans of one to 100 pounds, and in bladders; it keeps best in bladders, and the bulk of the putty exported goes in that form. Putty made in the Eastern cities of the United States is sold on the Atlantic seaboard and in the South, but not much Eastern putty is sold in the West, for there are putty manufactories in the Northern and Western cities.

We export putty to Canada, Mexico, the West Indies, South America, and the Sandwich Islands. Manufacturers make colored putties to order, and white, brown, and black putties are kept in stock. Putty has a variety of uses besides those already mentioned, and the very familiar one is setting glass. Brown putty is used to point brown-stone buildings and putty is sometimes used in pointing up brick buildings. Black putty is used in stove foundries. Plumbers use putty. Sometimes scene painters reduce it and put it on canvas to paint over. There are three or four putty manufactories in New York and more in Brooklyn. A single firm of manufacturers in this city has sold more than 17,000 tons in a year. These seem like large figures, but they are less surprising from the fact that there are few articles of more common use.

His First Sight of Webster.

"I shall never forget," says Sergeant-at-Arms Bright, in the Washington Post, "the first time I saw Webster. It was at the Astor House in New York. I was but a boy and had gone to the city with my father. I was going down the old steps that used to lead out on Broadway when I felt a stinging blow upon my shoulder from a whip or cane. Boylike, I was mad all over in an instant, and whirled around to see who had struck me. On the top of the step was a man about six feet tall, as slim as a ramrod, and holding in his hand a small bamboo cane such as were commonly carried in those days. I knew instinctively that he had hit me, and I started up the steps to have it out with him. I instantly planned the whole fight, and thought that the best way to get even with him would be to tackle him about the middle and try to break him in two. Just before I reached him I saw another man by his side, whose glance so fascinated me that I forgot all about the blow I had received. The man had large, lustrous eyes that charmed me as a snake charms a bird. I could do nothing but stand there and look at him. I learned afterward that it was Webster, and the man who tapped me with his cane was Thurlow Weed. The latter had supposed, which was true, that I was the son of Judge Bright, and he had stopped me to ask me if my father was in town, as he wanted to see him. I saw Webster frequently afterward, but I never forgot the incidents of my first meeting."

Cultivation of Rhubarb.

Rhubarb grows in the same ground for eight or ten years, and for that reason the ground must be thoroughly prepared at first. Plow the ground deep; then harrow and roll. Lay it out in rows, four feet apart, going twice in each row with the two-horse plow. Set a single root two inches below the ground and three feet in the row; cover with fine earth, and then put two forkfuls of rich, fine manure to each hill.

Market gardeners top dress with manure in the fall, and phosphate in the early spring—a quart to the hill, or a bucket of liquid manure to each hill. This extra fertilizing will make large stalks, and bring them on very early in the spring, when prices are highest. After the plants are set and manured, take the one-horse plow and throw a furrow on each side of the row. This will protect the crowns from freezing, and draw off the surface water.

Rhubarb can be forced by taking up a few crowns with large balls of earth and setting them in a hotbed, packed around with fine, rich earth. The crowns will soon start into growth, and, with care and attention, fine stalks may be had early in January. Crowns that have been forced are worthless, and should not be used again, as their vitality has been impaired.

There are several varieties of rhubarb, but the two best kinds are Myatts Linnaeus and Victoria. Linnaeus is the kind mostly grown. Rhubarb is easy to cultivate, and pays handsomely.

A Fingerless Family.

In a Lincolnshire family in England, lives a family who suffer under the curious deformity of being fingerless. This peculiarity does not appear to be one of those freaks of nature which may appear in one individual, and not be transmitted to the next generation. From what can be learned, the singularity has existed in the family so far as history or tradition extends, and there seems at present no signs of its dying out, as the grandchildren are as devoid of fingers as their grandsire.

The hands of this remarkable family present the appearance of having had the fingers amputated, or chopped off roughly and unevenly below the second joint, leaving a short stump. There is no nail or hard substance, and were it not for the absence of anything like a cicatrice a casual observer would conclude that the defect was due to an accident; but, as though nature had attempted to compensate for the absence of fingers, the thumbs are abnormally large and strong.

The family are in other respects fully endowed by nature, and do not appear to suffer the disadvantages the absence of fingers might be expected to entail. One of the daughters, aged 20, can write, sew, knit, and is in every way as dexterous and accomplished as other girls of her age and station. When asked if she "did not find it awkward to be fingerless," she replied:

"No! If you had never had fingers, you would not know you needed them."

The only drawback that seems to be occasioned is the curiosity the absence of fingers evokes from strangers.

A Merry Nation.

Austrians seem determined to maintain their reputation for being the most merry and pleasure-loving nation in Europe, for their parliament has just rejected, with a considerable show of indignation, a bill making drunkenness penal. The opponents of the measure found no difficulty in convincing the house that the established habits of the people were such that it was impossible to punish this failing, and that the feasts and family drinking bouts, which have been customary among the population for over 1,000 years, cannot be abolished by law.

An Old Custom.

The nomination of Sheriffs according to the present mode dates from 1461. The "shire-reeve" was first appointed by Alfred the Great to assist the Alderman and Bishop in the discharge of their judicial functions in counties. In Edward III.'s reign it was enacted that they should be "ordained on the morrow of All Souls, by the Chancellor, Treasurer and Chief Baron of the Exchequer." The only instance of a female Sheriff is that of Anne, Countess of Pembroke, who, on the death of her father, the Earl of Cumberland, without male heirs, in 1643, succeeded to the office in Westmoreland, and attended the Judges to Appleby.